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Epilogue: Indigenous Research: Future Directions

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<CH HEAD>Epilogue

<CH TITLE>Indigenous Research: Future Directions

Deborah McGregor

Indigenous research is often viewed as a novel and recently conceived research paradigm with the aim of explicitly and actively supporting the self-determination goals of Indigenous peoples (National Aboriginal Health Organization [NAHO], 2005). While it may be “new” to academia, engaging in Indigenous inquiry, along with its resultant knowledge production and mobilization, is actually far from new. Indigenous societies, like any autonomous and sovereign nations, required regularly updated knowledge to meet existing and emerging challenges. Indigenous peoples have thus been seeking knowledge to support their existence as peoples and nations for millennia (Absolon & Willet, 2004; Cardinal, 2001; Castellano, 2000; Colorado, 1988). As Cardinal (2001) observes, “Indigenous research methods and methodologies are as old as our ceremonies and our nations. They are with us and have always been with us. Our Indigenous cultures are rich with ways of gathering, discovering and uncovering knowledge” (p. 182).

As the various contributors to this volume have elaborated upon, Indigenous nations framed their research through their own ontological and epistemological foundations and methods (Kermoal & Altamirano-Jimenez, 2016). Traditionally, protocols for seeking knowledge were about *establishing relationships*, which were not “only integrated with the natural environment around us and with our living relations, but also with the timeless past and culture of our ancestors” (Colorado, 1988, p. 55).

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In such a research paradigm, one *shares* knowledge and remains accountable to that knowledge, rather than extracts or owns it. Knowledge is grounded in the richly diverse intellectual traditions of Indigenous peoples. One is not required to “separate” oneself from the research, but to approach it holistically, with the intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and physical aspects of the whole self (Absolon, 2010).

Over time, Indigenous modes of inquiry have been undermined, deemed inferior (if recognized at all), and even erased through imperial and colonial practices. As Linda T. Smith (1999) outlines in her seminal work, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, the Western scholarship that has emerged was necessary to rationalize and justify the continued subjugation of Indigenous people and the taking of their lands and lives. Others have noted the trajectory research has taken since the beginning of the *terra nullius* era through to contemporary Indigenous research (Saunders, West, & Usher, 2010; Wilson, 2008). The historical course of research involving Indigenous peoples from the time of European contact begins with the Western-defined concept of *terra nullius*, in which Indigenous peoples, “if recognized at all, were viewed as part of the flora and fauna, their lands awaiting European exploitation” (Wilson, 2008, p. 48). This phase dehumanized Indigenous peoples and provided the colonizers with the necessary justification for acquiring Indigenous territories. In the early “Aboriginal research phase” which followed, Indigenous peoples continued to be “researched” and Indigenous voices remained silenced. This was the norm until more recent eras which coincided with the rise of Indigenous rights movements and Indigenous peoples asserting their voice, directly challenging Euro-Western colonial and imperial research paradigms.

Subsequent to this has been the recent “decolonizing research” phase, which has initiated the development of a distinct Indigenous research paradigm aimed at serving the interests of

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Indigenous peoples. In Canada, this paradigm shift can be seen as having occurred in public policy when the language used to describe Aboriginal research undertakings switched from research “on” to research “with” Indigenous peoples (McNaughton & Rock, 2004). This small but significant change in usage signalled the advent of research approaches that require Indigenous involvement from the conception of research to its conclusion. An example of this new policy direction can be found in the Tri-Council Policy Statement, *Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* (TCPS 2), which devotes an entire chapter to ethical research involving First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples of Canada (TCPS 2, 2014). This policy does not *require* collaboration or participatory approaches per se, but encourages them through the use of research agreements and ethical considerations. Moreover, it states that research which does not reflect the notion of working “with” Indigenous peoples may be called into question on ethical grounds. To support the implementation of ethical research, the TCPS 2 offers courses on various elements of the policy, including research involving Indigenous peoples. Module 9, “Research Involving the First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples of Canada,” is offered online and includes a training webinar. Some research institutions have made these courses a mandatory requirement before undertaking research. Carleton University offers a week-long summer institute focused on Indigenous research to further advance the theory and practice of Indigenous research. The TCPS 2 espouses an approach to research with Indigenous peoples that does not exclude non-Indigenous researchers from engaging in such research, and promoting, or some in cases privileging, Indigenous modes of inquiry is not without its risks. However, engaging in research involving Indigenous peoples without sufficient grounding in Indigenous research methods may result in appropriation of Indigenous culture and other negative outcomes regardless of whether the researchers are Indigenous or non-Indigenous. The primary approach

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for addressing such concerns lies in the application of high ethical standards. As Keely Ten Fingers (2005) writes:

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In order to move beyond the legacy of colonialism and its effects on meaningful research, indigenous methodologies must be utilized in all research involving indigenous peoples and our territories. This means indigenous peoples must be involved throughout the research process, from design to data collection and analysis to dissemination. (p. 62)

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Perhaps paradoxically, there is much research that concerns itself primarily with Indigenous peoples, but which may not be regarded as “Indigenous research” per se. Indigenous research paradigms are distinct, as explained in the introduction to this volume. There are indeed various schools of thought within the Indigenous research paradigm that speak to the conduct of such research (see McGregor & Plain, 2014, for schools of thought within Indigenous research).

In this volume, there are contributions by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars. Both have employed research methods and practices supported by the community(ies) involved, thus striving to ensure the research benefits reflect community goals and needs. Certainly, there are those who will feel this approach may still leave Indigenous communities and peoples vulnerable to exploitive research and appropriation. Abenaki scholar Lori Lambert observes that if one is not from the community or nation one is engaged with in research (Indigenous or non-), one can never truly understand the stories being told (Lambert, 2014, p. 30). Researchers in this sense must be open, honest, and transparent about their own limitations, with themselves and

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with the communities with which they are working. In this light, the researcher's goal is not to tell the community's story, but to empower the community to tell their own story, on their own terms, for their own purpose. Self-determination in research means that, ultimately, communities will determine who they participate with in research, and what methods will be employed (Lambert, 2014).

Despite such progress over the past few decades, wherein Indigenous scholars have advanced Indigenous research theories and methodologies based on their own cultural foundations, full acceptance of Indigenous research paradigms within the academy remains elusive (Kovach, 2015). Contributors to this volume reveal that one of the barriers to such acceptance is that “unlearning” of Western modes of research seems to be a prerequisite for embracing Indigenous research. In Canada, research exists within the broader context of a society that has not yet come to terms with its relationship with Indigenous peoples. The Canadian government–sponsored Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) revealed that Canada remains very much a systemically colonial and racist society in its dealings with Indigenous peoples. Academic institutions remain the primary producers of knowledge in this country, which, while logical in a sense, also serves to perpetuate the status quo, given the “academy’s role in the ongoing colonization of Indigenous peoples. The academy has much invested in maintaining control over who defines knowledge, who has access to knowledge and who produces knowledge” (Mihsuah & Wilson, 2004, p. 5). As a way of bringing about change, Indigenous scholars are now advocating for space within academia for a vastly increased Indigenous scholarship, lest the academy remain a source of epistemic violence and domination (Kuokkanen, 2007; Mihsuah & Wilson, 2004). In other words, more than research methodologies require decolonizing: the academy and the institutions that support it also require

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explicit and purposeful decolonization processes (this includes funding bodies, identification of research priorities, etc.).

Without a doubt, many challenges remain to be addressed, but as our contributors have shared in their stories, it is possible to find expression of Indigenous research in the academy through collaborative or community-based and community-driven research efforts.

<A>Indigenous Research to Support Self-Determination and Sovereignty

Indigenous peoples have not been idle, simply waiting for decolonizing processes to take place and the full recognition of Indigenous scholarship in the academy and elsewhere to occur. They have begun to set the parameters and ground rules for what respectful and ethical research will look like by developing their own research agendas, policies, processes, and ethical guidelines. Castellano (2004) further adds that “fundamental to the exercise of self-determination is the right of peoples to construct knowledge in accordance with self-determined [*sic*] definitions of what is real and what is valuable” (p. 102). Noteworthy in this regard are the OCAP (Ownership, Control, Access and Protection) principles, developed by the Steering Committee of the First Nations Regional Longitudinal Health Survey (NAHO, 2007), which state that “OCAP is inextricably linked to the agenda of self-determination for Indigenous people because it serves to guide the re-appropriation of the research activities and outcomes in research pertaining to Indigenous people and it provides the context within which the development of culturally relevant, Indigenous worldview based research paradigms are developing” (Ermine, Sinclair, & Jeffery, 2004, pp. 34–35).

The principles are “an expression of self-determination in research designed to ensure Indigenous sovereignty over their own knowledge” (NAHO, 2005, p. i). Indigenous peoples are

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developing their own research governance processes to ensure that research serves their goals and aspirations. In situations where the necessary Indigenous research protocols do not exist, researchers seek to establish governance bodies (through advisory committees, etc.) to guide and provide oversight for research. Several contributors to this volume (L. McGregor; Maniowabi & Marr; Howard) have offered examples of this type of governance in various contexts. Of note is the Manitoulin Anishinabek Research Review Committee, coordinated by Noojmowin Teg Health Centre. The review committee governs health research on Manitoulin Island through the Guidelines for Ethical Aboriginal Research (GEAR), an excellent example of community-based ethical guidelines that support Indigenous research self-determination. As Indigenous peoples continue to move toward self-determination and sovereignty, research that supports and realizes these goals becomes increasingly important, through OCAP and other principles (e.g., “data sovereignty” [Kukutai & Taylor, 2016]).

The application of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP) in research contexts has yet to be fully explored, although it can be argued that any research involving Indigenous peoples should support Indigenous peoples’ pursuit of self-determination. Article 31(1) of UNDRIP has specific implications for Indigenous research:

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Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain, control, protect, and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions, as well as the manifestations of their sciences, technologies and cultures, including human and genetic resources, seeds, medicines, knowledge of the properties of fauna and flora, oral traditions, literatures, designs, sports, traditional games and visual and performing arts. They also have the right to maintain,

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control, protect and develop their intellectual property over such cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and traditional cultural expressions. (United Nations General Assembly [UNGA], 2007)

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Indigenous conceptual or theoretical research approaches and methods are fundamentally based on Indigenous worldviews (Absolon & Willet, 2004; Castellano, 2004; Cardinal, 2001; Peltier Sinclair, 2003; Steinhauer, 2002; Wilson, 2003). This means that there will be a diversity of theoretical frameworks, methods, and applications that will reflect the variety of Indigenous traditions in Canada. Moreover, such theories, frameworks, and methods are not static: they are continually being revised and continue to evolve (Peltier Sinclair, 2003, p. 132).

The contributors to this volume attest to the diversity of Indigenous research methods, relating a variety of ways that research has been undertaken under the guidance of Indigenous collaborators and partners. Such approaches include: ceremony (e.g., bundles, song, and dance), mentoring and apprenticeship by Elders/Traditional Knowledge holders, experience, reflection/meditation, dreams, sharing circles, talking circles, healing circles, storytelling/storywork, invoking Tricksters (Nanbusho, Raven), treaty, drums, and witnessing.

<A>Story as a Relational Process

In addition to being highly diverse in nature, Indigenous research is inherently contextual: the inherent “relationality” of it means that one cannot simply import theory, ways of knowing, and/or methods from one context to another, however defined (geographically, politically, culturally, etc.). In this volume, modifications of the “conversational method” (described by

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Kovach, 2010) and “collaborative storytelling” (Bishop, 1999) were employed as researchers conveyed the complexities and nuances involved in engaging with Indigenous research. These methods acknowledge “that the researcher is positioned as a research participant within the process of storying and restorying that creates the narrative” (Bishop, 1999, p. 6). Kovach writes that Indigenous scholars and those engaged in Indigenous research methodologies “have, to a certain extent, engaged in conversation on paradigm as form” (2010, p. 41).

Engaging in such approaches to research transforms both the research and the researcher, as the learning becomes embodied. Bishop (1999) describes this as follows: “To be involved somatically means to be involved bodily, that is physically, ethically, morally and spiritually, not just in one’s capacity as a ‘researcher’ concerned with methodology” (p. 22). Indigenous research is not conducive to a “check box” approach, with items to be ticked off as each criterion is met. Indigenous research requires constant reflection, taking a step back, and “unlearning” in some cases. Moreover, Indigenous (and Indigenist) research is not neutral. Its aims are to support Indigenous goals and aspirations, and these aims may indeed be at odds with other interests.

This volume represents a form of *collective storytelling*, wherein contributors choose to convey their lives and experiences in research (in singing, drumming, dancing, praying, reflection, etc.). In this way, the contributors have been “researching themselves” as research “participants” to develop a “mutually constructed story created out of the lived experiences of the research participants” (Bishop, 1999, p. 2). Stories embedded in experience facilitate diversities in meaning, rather than one dominant story to be heard.

In its form and content, this volume also challenges the way in which research is communicated, creating a form of modern-day sharing circle which could help reshape the practice of academic writing. Contributors have demonstrated the divergent ways Indigenous

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research may be presented: some choose more creative expressions (poetry, prayer), while others adopt a conventional written approach, and others still opt for a narrative “in-between” style (Danard, 2015; Graveline, 1998; Suchet-Pearson, Wright, Lloyd, Burarrwanga, & Hodge, 2013; Wilson, 2008). The central purpose in communicating research is to empower and give “voice” (Lambert, 2014). Indigenous modes of expressing “knowing” vary just as Indigenous research practices are diverse. There is no one way to tell your research story. Abenaki researcher Lori Lambert (2014) describes the key distinction between this process and Western approaches as being in “the relationship that the research has with the story, how it is told and how the knower and researcher interpret the story” (p. 2). How the research story is told depends on who you are writing for and why you doing so, among other considerations. There is no requirement for a formula or standardized way of writing about Indigenous research scholarship. We accepted Vanessa Watts’ caution against the limitations that binaries create (Indigenous vs. academic styles of writing), and against presupposing what Indigenous research should look like, compared to what actually emerges in practice. We respected and included reflective narrative, conversation storywork, creative expression, and more conventional ways of expressing “how” research is conducted to emphasize that there is no universal Indigenous doctrine for writing about research.

The researchers’ stories in this volume reveal truths about the place of Indigenous scholarship in the academy as they constantly navigate and negotiate between different realms, expectations, and obligations (Hunt, 2014; Kovach, 2010). These stories may make some readers uncomfortable, as contributors speak to their own discomfort and unease while seeking to frame research in context and place. The broader research environment is not always welcoming or accommodating to Indigenous research approaches. Indigenous scholars continue to experience

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instances of micro-aggression and lateral violence, as well as epistemic dominance and violence (Kuokkanen, 2007). Academic imperialism persists; systemic and institutional change are required to address the deeply entrenched colonial nature of the academy, and to ensure a safe and productive space for Indigenous scholars and scholarship. Decolonizing the academy should not fall solely on the shoulders of Indigenous researchers/scholars; the academy itself must assume responsibility for its violence.

One of the great values of the stories in this volume lies in their service as reminders that the forging of new relationships requires work and energy; it does not just happen.

<A>Indigenous Ways of Knowing in Research

Various approaches have emerged in broader research agendas to account for Indigenous ways of knowing. As one example, the Institute of Aboriginal Peoples' Health (IAPH), a division of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), has adopted, as a central component of its Five-Year Strategic Plan for Aboriginal Peoples' Health, an Aboriginal health research program based on the Mi'kmaw principles of Etuaptmumk, or "Two-Eyed Seeing," influenced by the work and teachings of Mi'kmaw Elder and knowledge holder Albert Marshall. In this knowledge sharing model, Indigenous and Western perspectives collaborate to address health concerns in Indigenous communities. The *Five-Year Strategic Plan 2014–18*, in its "Strategic Direction #2: Transforming First Nations, Inuit and Métis Health through Indigenous Ways of Knowing," describes Two-Eyed Seeing as follows:

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Two-Eyed Seeing in research speaks to community-relevant and community-based health research that engages First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples in the design, implementation, analysis, data management and sharing of the research. Among its strengths, Two-Eyed Seeing in research enables the direct benefits of cultural connection, safety and control for First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples, achieved through ensuring involvement and a balance between “western” and Indigenous research methodologies, analysis and subsequent treatments. (CIHR, 2015, p. 26)

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The concept of negotiating between different knowledge systems is gaining increasing attention, and the Two-Eyed Seeing approach itself has been taken up by a number of researchers in health fields (Hall et al., 2015; Lavalée & Lévesque, 2013). The concept recognizes that, in advocating and advancing Indigenous research approaches, paradigms, and methodologies, Indigenous peoples are not rejecting Western knowledge systems outright, but are seeking equitable consideration and application of both systems when and where appropriate. The Two-Eyed Seeing approach in fact incorporates aspects of Western systems, but does so on Indigenous terms and in ways that will serve Indigenous peoples. There are other Indigenous research models that also give due consideration to Indigenous and non-Indigenous ways of knowing, yet remain situated within Indigenous theoretical frameworks (Latulippe, 2015).

Another emerging notion with respect to the collaboration of Indigenous and non-Indigenous research methods involves the concept of research as being bound by treaty relationships. As discussed by Luby et al. (this volume), scholars can (and should) be seen as treaty beneficiaries, and as such they have obligations and responsibilities to uphold their part of

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the treaty relationship. This treaty approach may be employed to outline the roles and responsibilities of researchers to people, place, and land, and can thus be a powerful embodiment of relational accountability. The treaty approach is also elaborated upon by Latulippe (2015). Latulippe outlines the broader historical and political context in which her research is situated, identifying treaties as covenants between sovereign nations that come to bear in research endeavours, and yet which are often not considered. A research undertaking's philosophical orientation based on a relevant treaty(ies) "offers rich grounds from which to ethically approach place, people and politics" (Latulippe, 2015, p. 7). As pointed out in the introduction to this volume, Indigenous research methodologies and practices reflect such relationships to place, people, and history. Understanding the history of how we got to where we are forms an important aspect of understanding "relational accountability."

In other words, outside of specific research relationships themselves, there exist other obligations and responsibilities, and these should be brought to bear on research practices. Instead, research agendas have often been used to undermine Indigenous nations by exploiting and expropriating Indigenous peoples, lands, and identities. The treaty approach described by Luby et al. (this volume) and Latulippe (2015) recognizes the existence of a colonial history that continues to mar the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. This broader, contextual relationship should not be ignored in research. Luby et al. utilize Treaty #3 (a numbered treaty in northwestern Ontario), while Latulippe draws on the Kaswentha, or Two-Row Wampum (a pre-colonial treaty), to facilitate understanding of knowledge exchange, generation, and transmission from an Indigenous perspective, and provide recognition of the fact that Indigenous and non-Indigenous partners in research, and those affected by the research, are now sharing of the same space. Latulippe further reflects on the Kaswentha, stating, "Applied

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methodologically, separate rows [of beads in the Two-Row Wampum treaty belt] signify epistemic difference, while the shared space – the bridging rows of peace, friendship, and respect – mirrors the conceptual space shared by Indigenous and Western qualitative research methodologies” (Latulippe, 2015, p. 9).

As the basis for a research approach and methodology, treaties seek to highlight and bridge epistemic differences through mutual understanding and reciprocal obligation. Treaties also espouse a common vision and explicitly aim to reconcile differences through a covenant of relationships that requires ongoing renewal. We can also learn from the treaty approach that relationships, like research, are not intended to be “one-shot deals”; they require long-term and ongoing engagement, and they recognize that no relationship is perfect and that hard work is required to facilitate “good relations.”

<A>The Contemporary Indigenous Research Landscape

The “research landscape,” internationally and within Canada, has shifted. Emergent Indigenous research approaches continue to shape broader research initiatives. In Canada, CIHR’s (2015) adoption of the Two-Eyed Seeing approach is one such accomplishment. Internationally, the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP; UNGA, 2007) offers a path forward for Indigenous self-determination. More work is required to determine how Indigenous research might support the realization of the goals of UNDRIP. In order to meet the obligations set out in UNDRIP, research directions, priorities, and processes will have to change considerably. For example, the requirement of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) has recently become a noteworthy research topic as many struggle to determine what these principles actually mean in practice. UNDRIP nevertheless offers promising directions in research,

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particularly in light of the fact that until recently most research *on* Indigenous peoples was designed in such a way as to achieve the opposite of many of UNDRIP's stated purposes.

The TRC released its final report in 2015 and set out a path forward via 94 recommendations, or "Calls to Action" (CTAs). To support the goals of reconciliation, CTA 65 states that:

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We call upon the federal government, through the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, and in collaboration with Aboriginal peoples, post-secondary institutions and educators, and the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation and its partner institutions, to establish a national research program with multi-year funding to advance understanding of reconciliation.

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CTA 65 thus calls on research funding bodies to develop a research program to support the broader societal goals of reconciliation. These goals have not remained uncontested, with some scholars indicating that "reconciliation," as coined by the state, supports the goals of the state rather than the aspirations of Indigenous peoples. Ideally, however, the research directions that emerge in response to CTA 65 will result in robust dialogue around what is actually meant by "reconciliation" research and what other goals may be relevant to Indigenous peoples in this area. In fact, the Calls to Action, taken holistically, call for transformative change in education at all levels, including a set of principles to help guide such a process. Space must be made for different research strategies to achieve self-determination and sovereignty, beyond what may be

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possible in reconciliation research alone. Métis scholar Adam Gaudry (2015) asserts that the concept of “resurgence” or “insurgent” research that prioritizes Indigenous goals and aspirations is an essential strategy in research involving Indigenous peoples and communities. As the cadre of Indigenous scholars continues to grow, Indigenous scholarship will gain ground in the academy (and elsewhere). We will see in the coming years more diverse research practices and forms of producing and presenting knowledge.

<A>Conclusion: Creating Ethical Space in Research

Working effectively in the realm of Indigenous research, while simultaneously operating within the current socio-political context of Indigenous renewal, revitalization, and resurgence, requires a keen understanding of the goals and aspirations of Indigenous peoples. Responding to the diverse yet transformative forms Indigenous research can take, this volume set out to create ethical space for dialogue on how research relationships can be negotiated and *lived*.

Relationships require work, commitment, energy, communication, and continuous engagement; they do not happen just because we want them to. The importance of creating ethical space for discussion moves the consideration of Indigenous research forward, rather than perpetuating the binary notion of “Western” versus “Indigenous” research. The binary model, while helpful and necessary in distinguishing the key differences between the two systems, contributes little in terms of addressing the rapidly shifting contextual landscape that calls for innovative approaches to Indigenous research practice. Creating this ethical space, then, is necessary when two distinct societies are required to engage with each other. Ethical space is described by Ermine et al. (2004) as

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the idea of two spheres of knowledge, two cultures, each distinct from one another in multiple forms, [which] needs to be envisioned since the distance also inspires an abstract, nebulous space of possibility. The in-between space, relative to cultures, is created by the recognition of the separate realities of histories, knowledge traditions, values, interests, and social, economic and political imperatives. The positioning of these two entities, divided by the void and flux of their cultural distance, and in a manner that they are poised to encounter each other, produces a significant and interesting notion that has relevance in research thought. (p. 20)

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As outlined by various contributors to this volume, such ethical space recognizes ongoing tensions, but also creates the space within which critical dialogue, reflection, and change may take place. Ermine et al. contend that ethical space is a process that unfolds as dialogue continues. Our intention in this volume has been to generate substance and depth to ongoing dialogue on how to animate mutually beneficial relations in research. It is hoped that the ethical space for such dialogue will expand into a wide variety of research areas as the work toward a sustainable future for all of us intensifies.

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